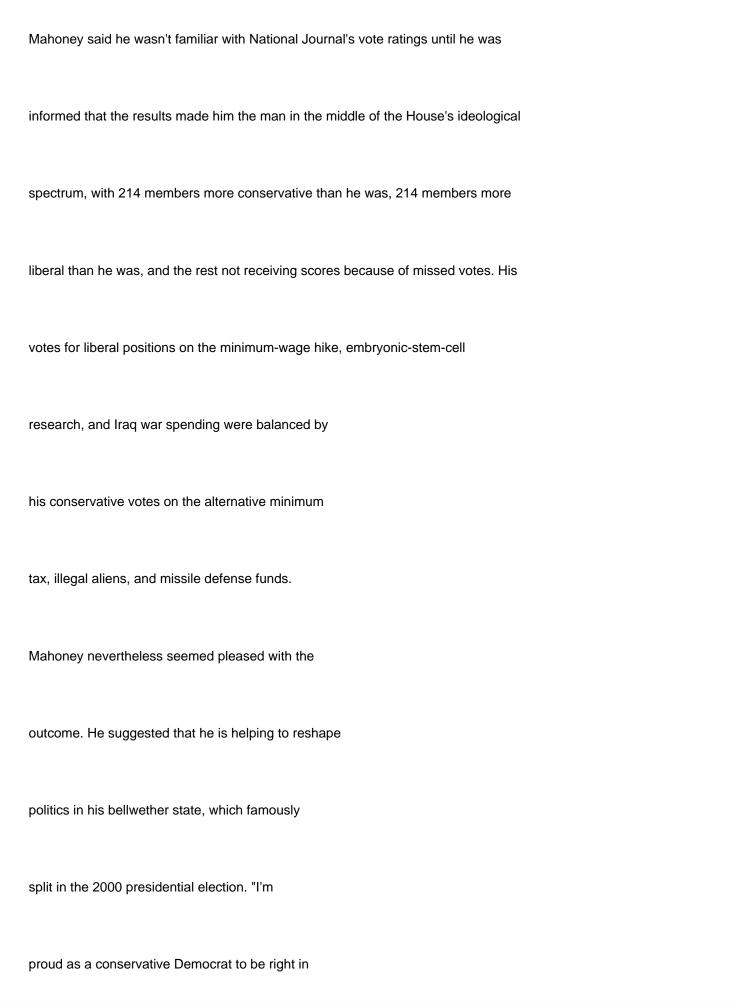
National Journal: The New Center
By Richard E. Cohen and Brian Friel
The National Journal
March 8, 2008
The freshman Democratic "majority makers"
are overwhelmingly moderate in National Journal 's
2007 congressional vote ratings. They hope their
willingness to buck liberal orthodoxy will help them
keep their seats in 2008.
When freshman Rep. Tim Mahoney, D-Fla., learned that his voting
record in 2007 placed him precisely in the center of the House in

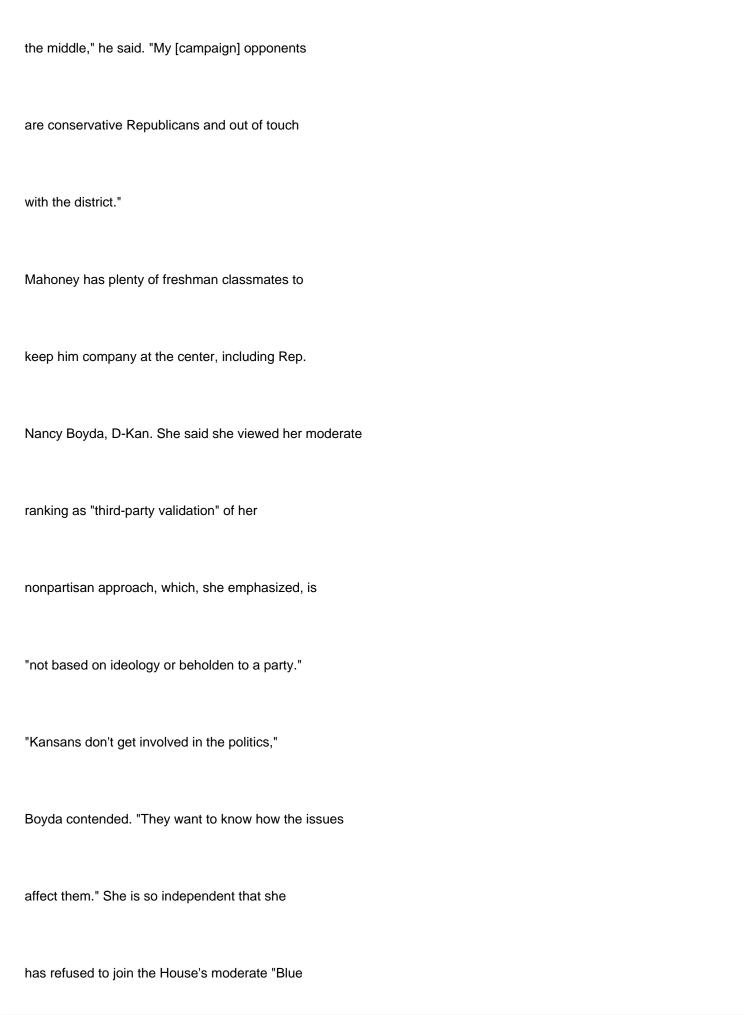
National Journal's congressional vote ratings, his initial reaction was laughter. "I laughed because of the statistical probability," he said. "I was never a legislator. I was a businessman who gets the facts in the best interests of my district. I don't get caught up in ideology." Instead, Mahoney explained, he has focused on the diverse needs of his South Florida constituents, including strengthening federal protection of homeowners insurance against hurricanes, developing water-resource projects to clean up the Everglades, and boosting the development of fuels made from sugarcane. "I got elected because people in my district weren't happy with the status quo," said Mahoney, who has been widely described as an "accidental" congressman because he won the seat of Republican Rep. Mark Foley, who resigned shortly

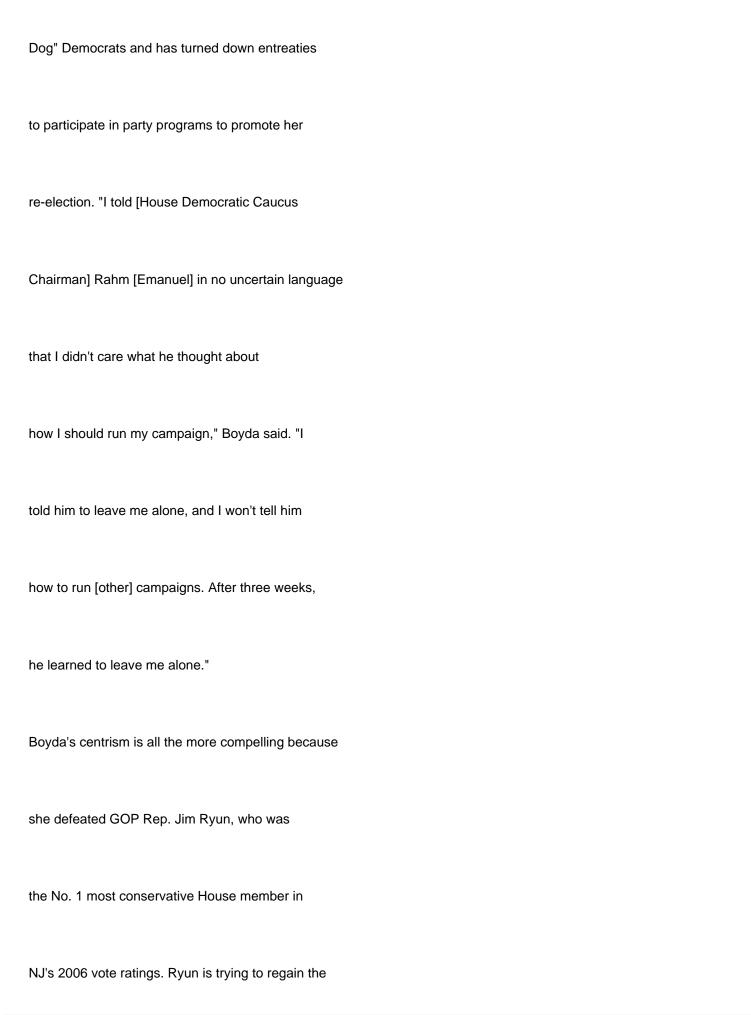
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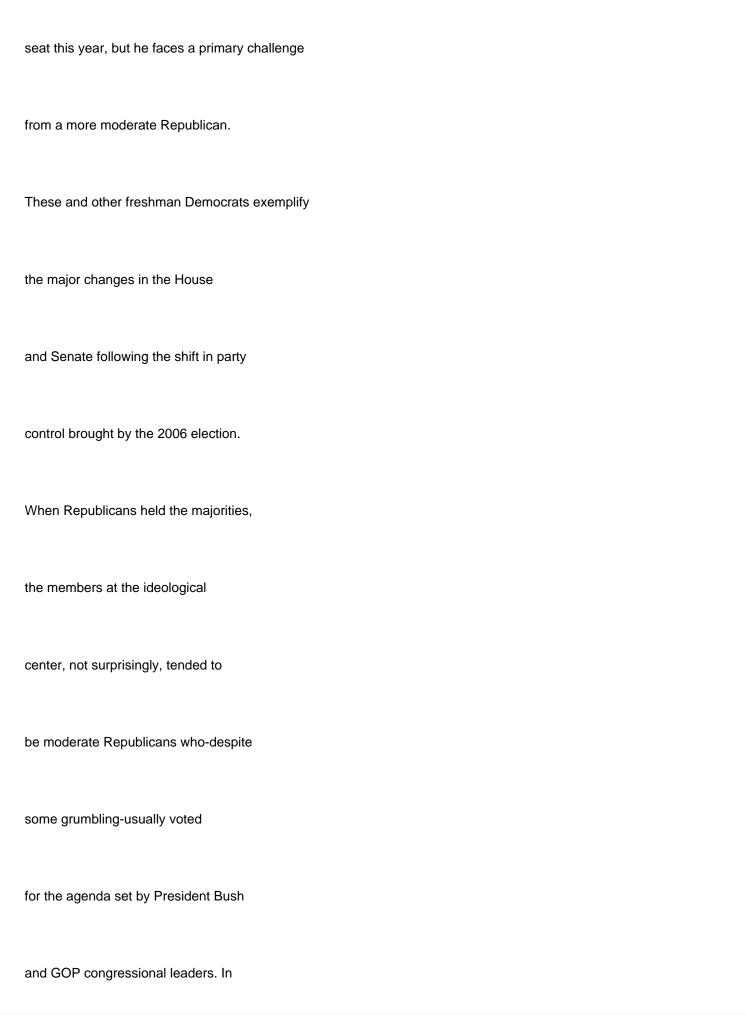
before the 2006 election after it was disclosed that he had sent sexually explicit

instant messages to congressional pages.

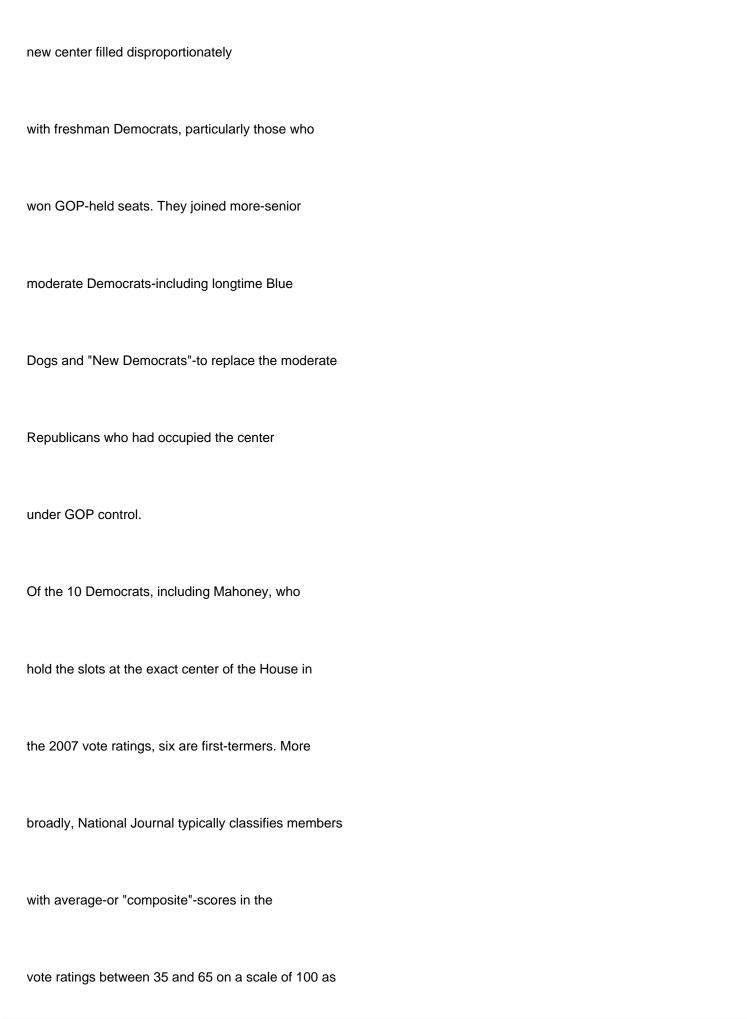


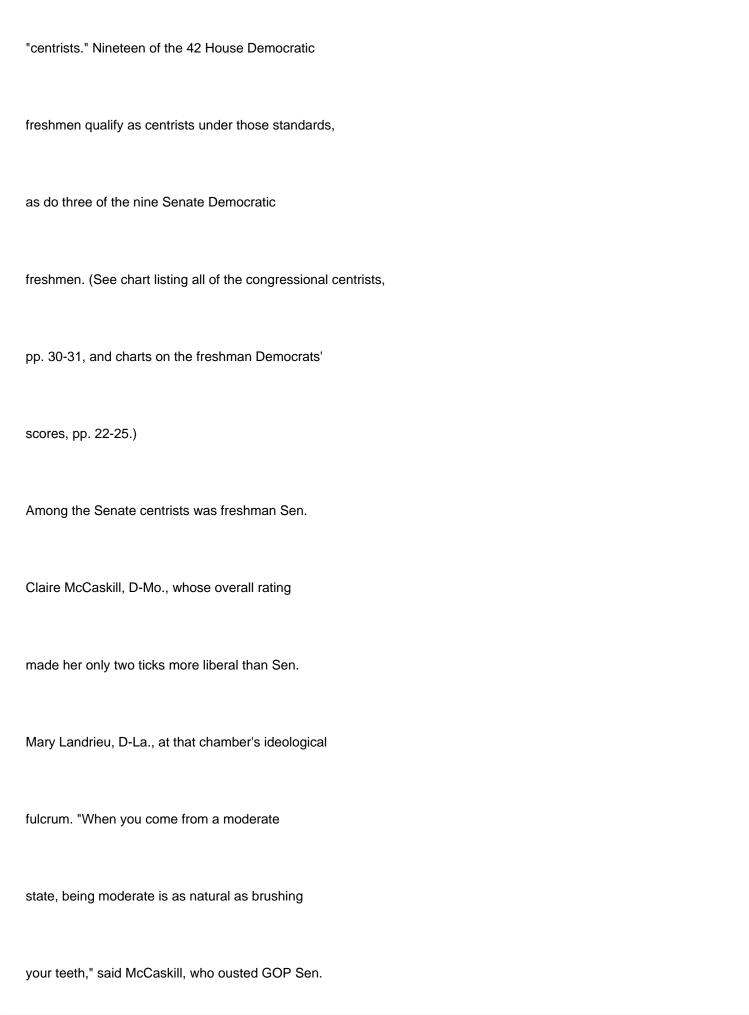


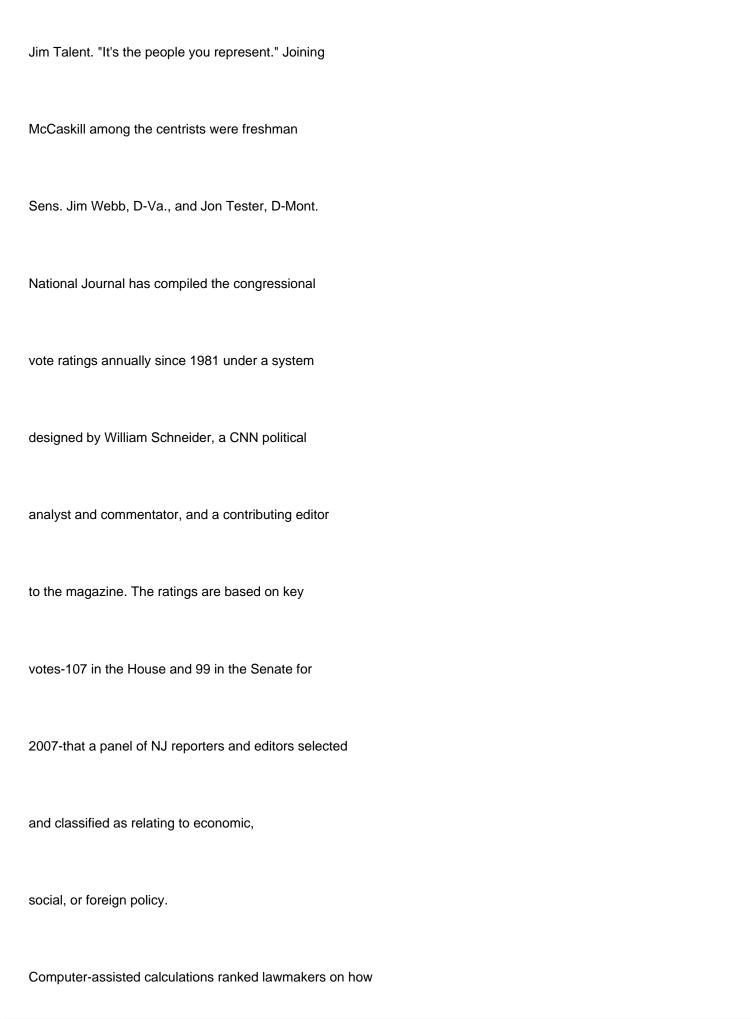


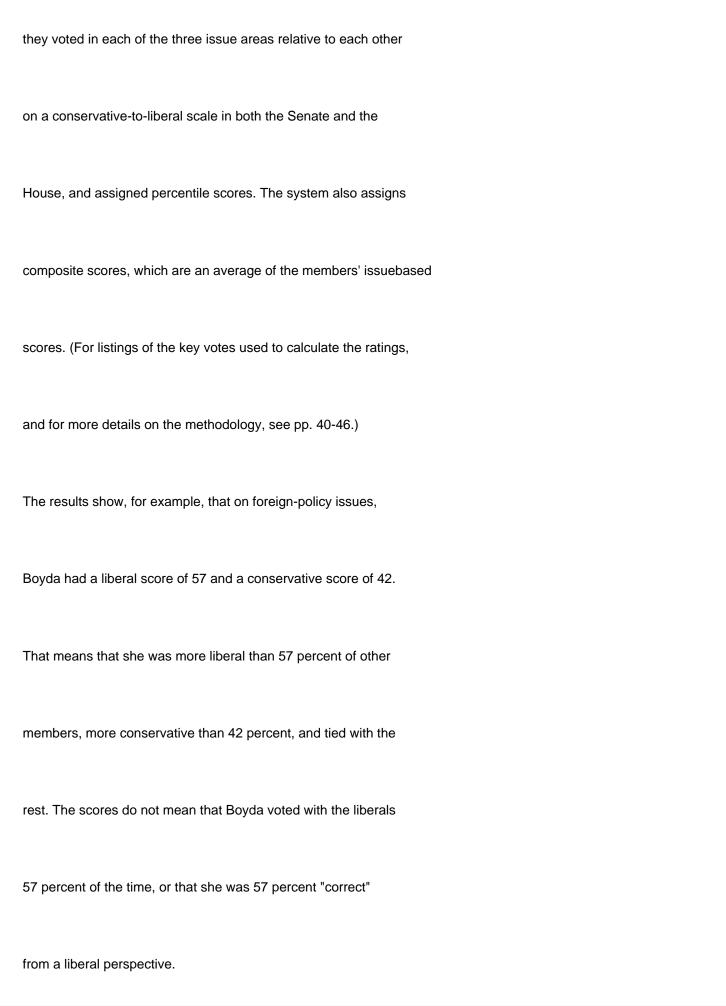


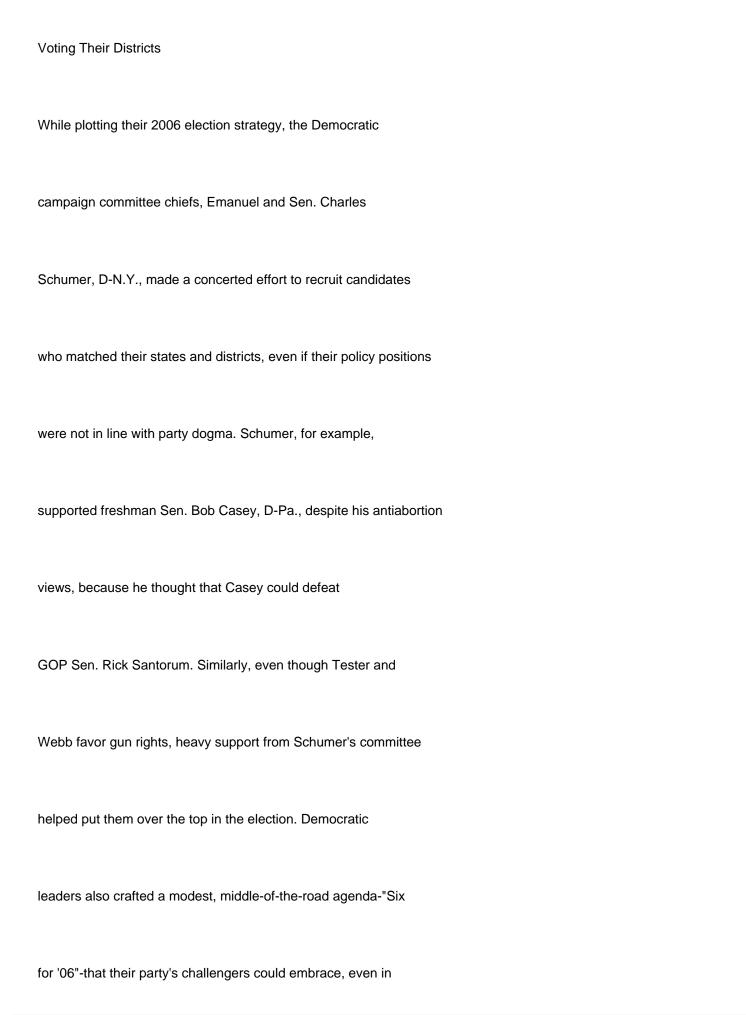
those days, the smaller corps of moderate
Democrats rarely determined
the outcome on major votes.
Those dynamics changed radically
last year, particularly in the House.
Republicans there displayed intense
cohesion and unity: None of them
ended up in the liberal half of the
chamber in the 2007 vote ratings,
and only Reps. Wayne Gilchrest, RMd.,
and Christopher Shays, RConn.,
ranked outside the 200 most
conservative members. The House's



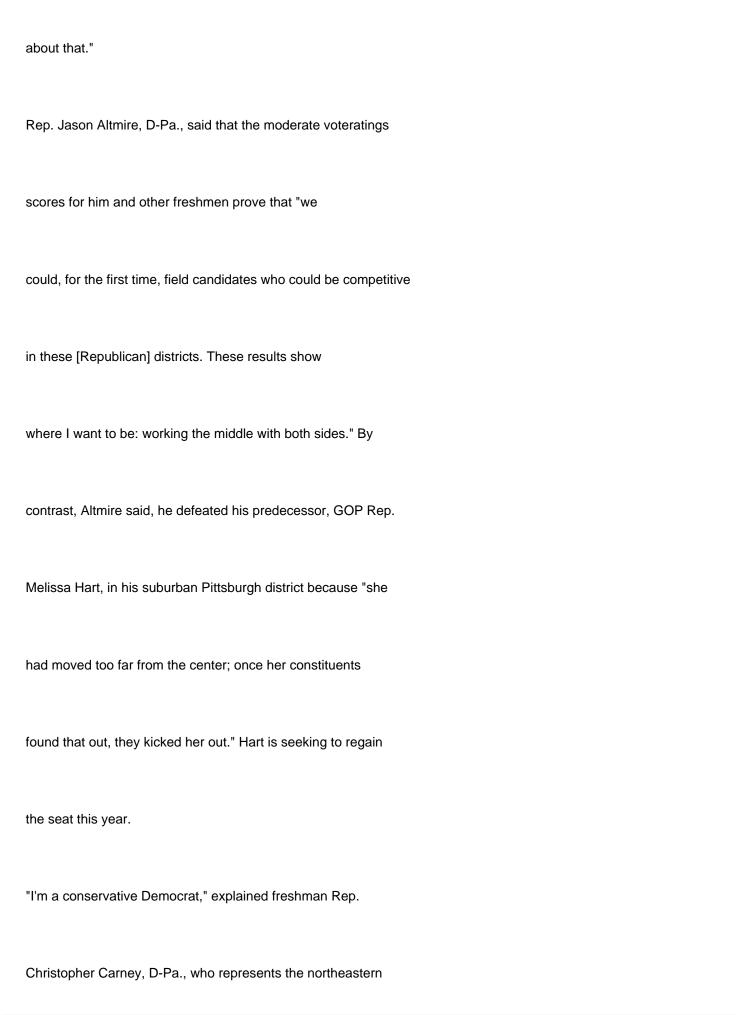


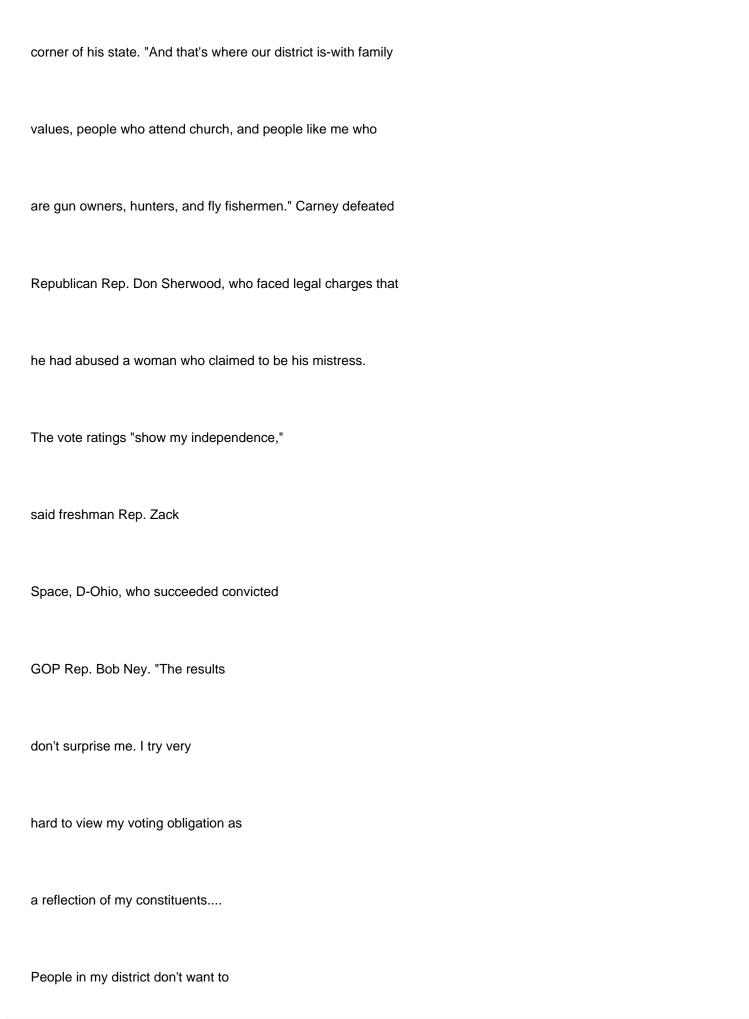




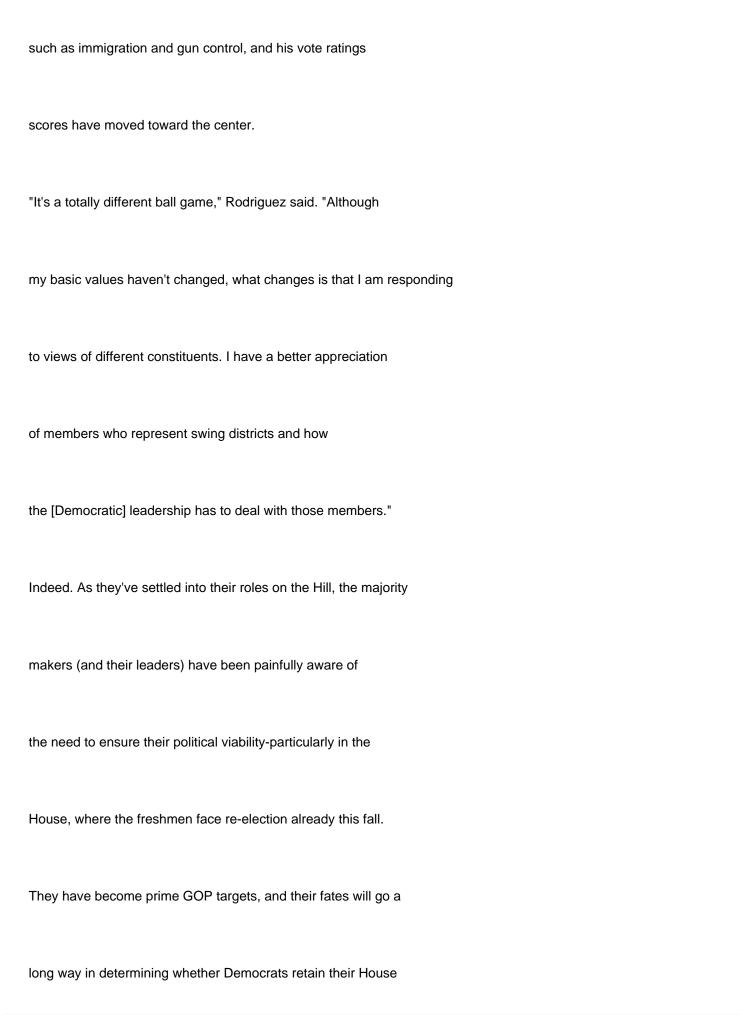


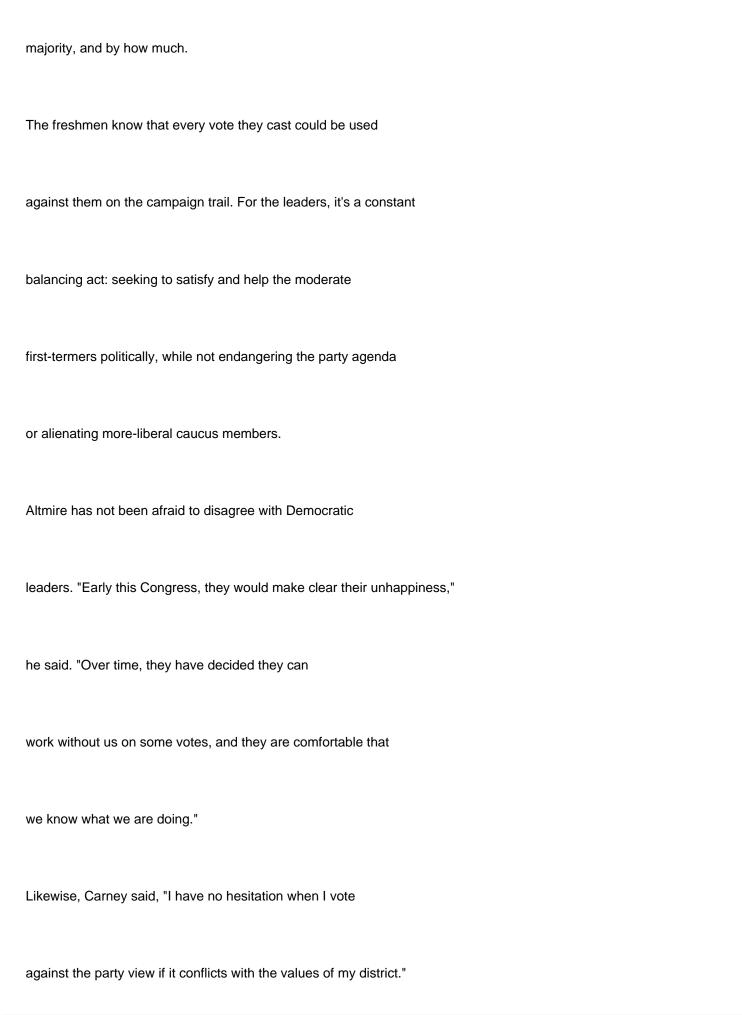


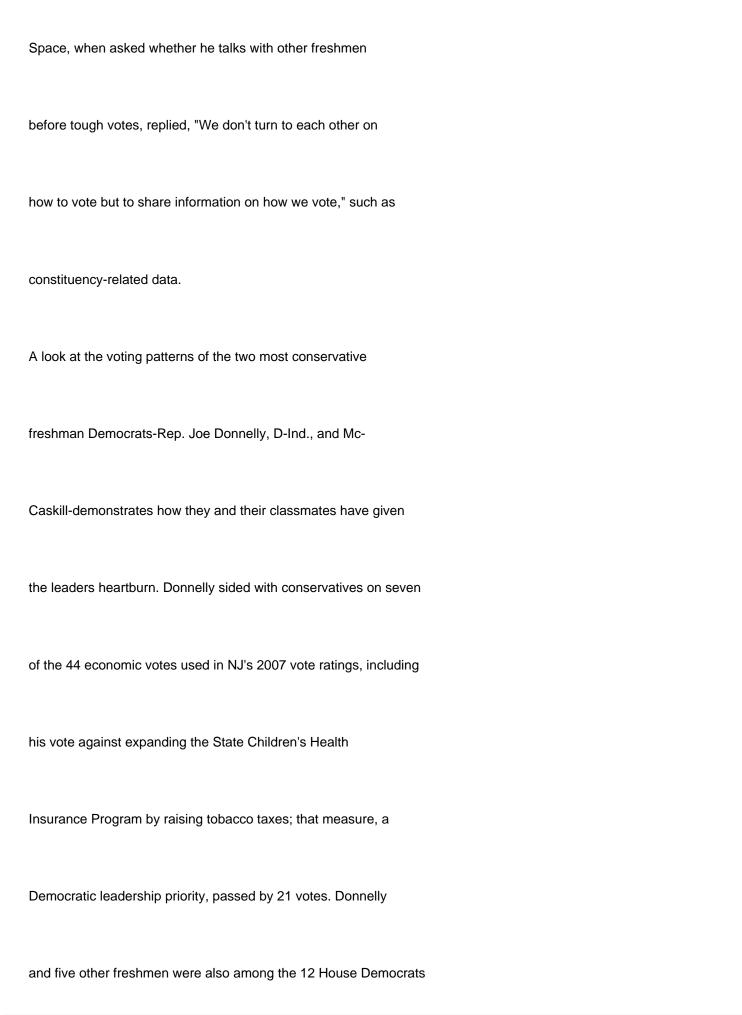


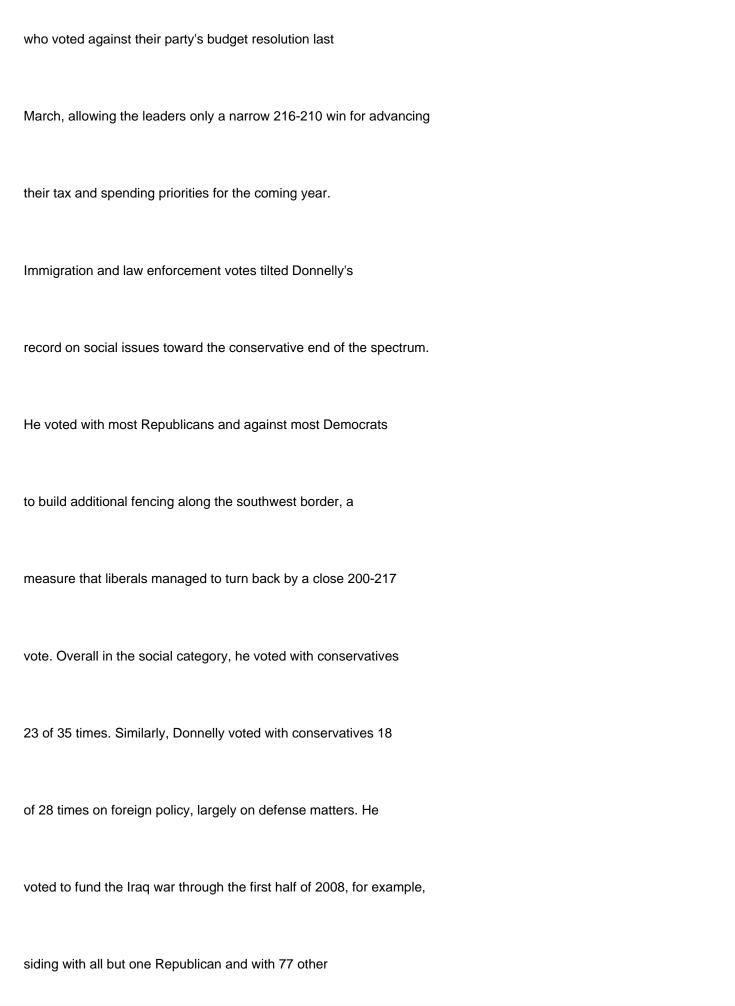


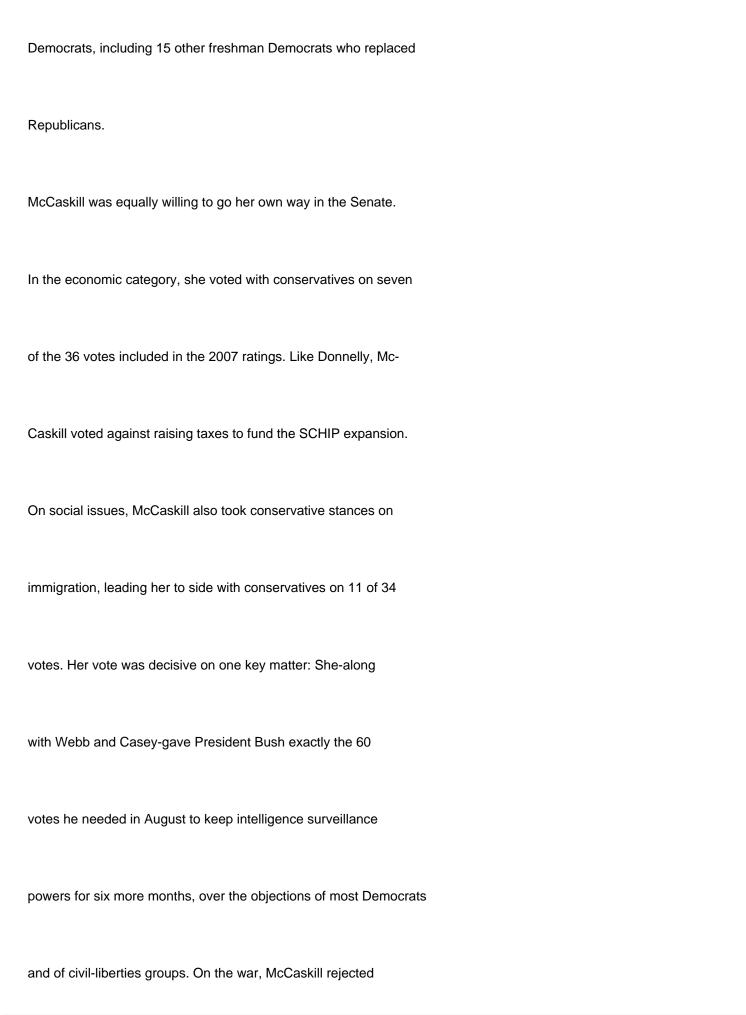
know about liberals and conservatives.
They want actions consistent
with their values."
Freshman Rep. Ciro Rodriguez, DTexas,
previously represented a mostly
urban district centered in San Antonio.
But because of redistricting,
the seat he captured in his 2006
comeback is radically different and
far more conservative, sprawling
more than 600 miles from the San
Antonio suburbs to the outskirts of
El Paso. He now takes more-conservative stances on some issues,

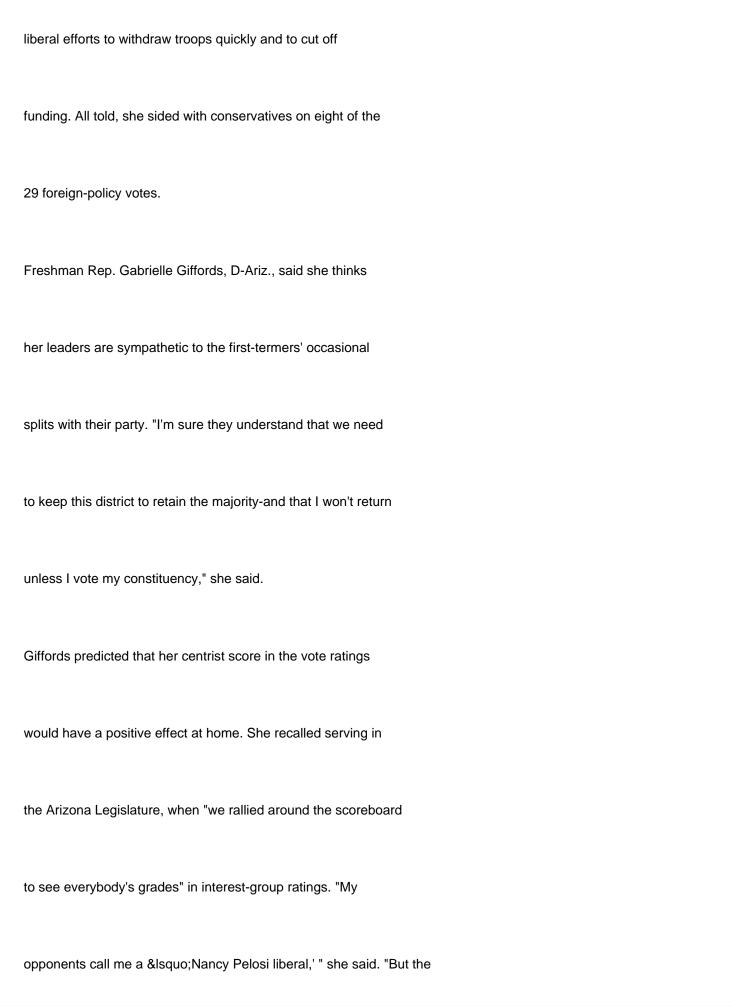


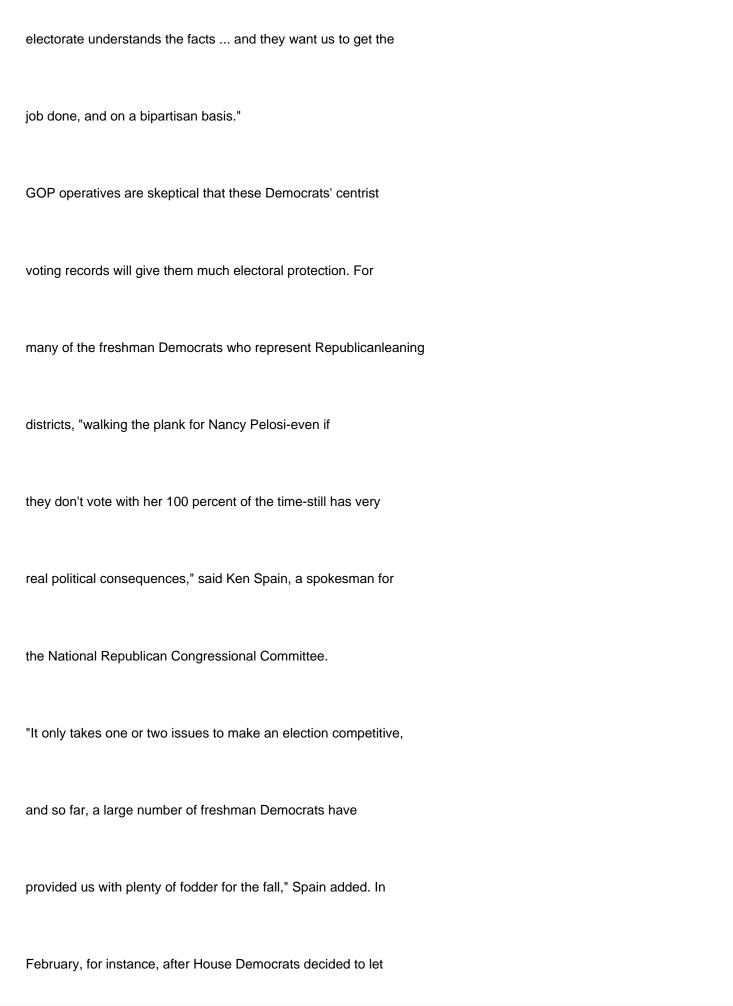


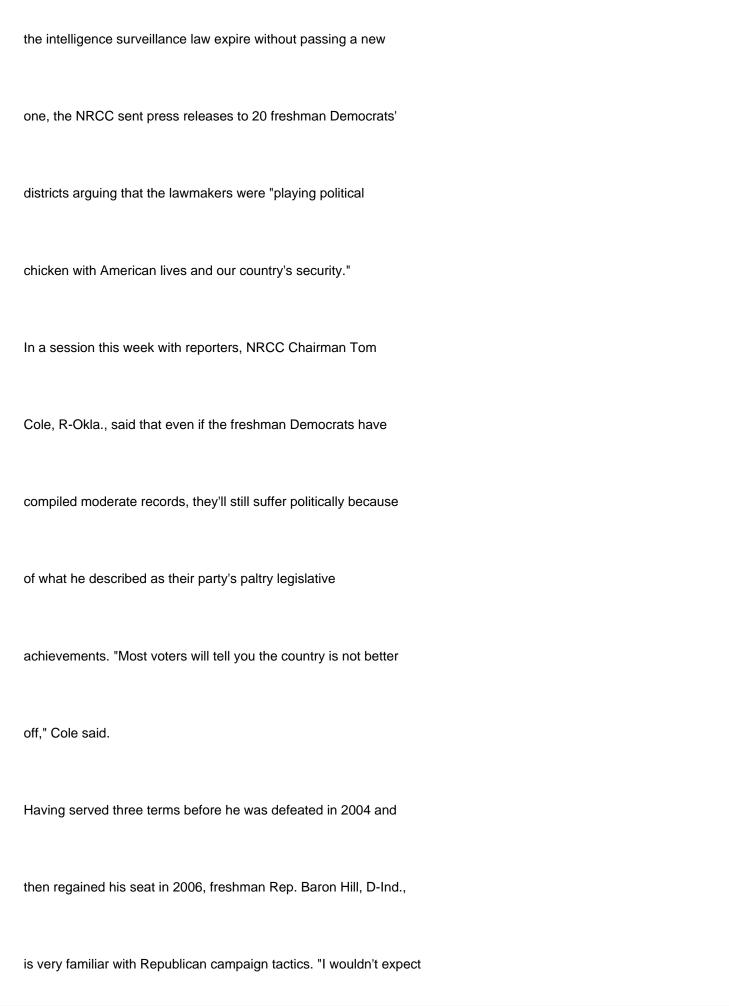


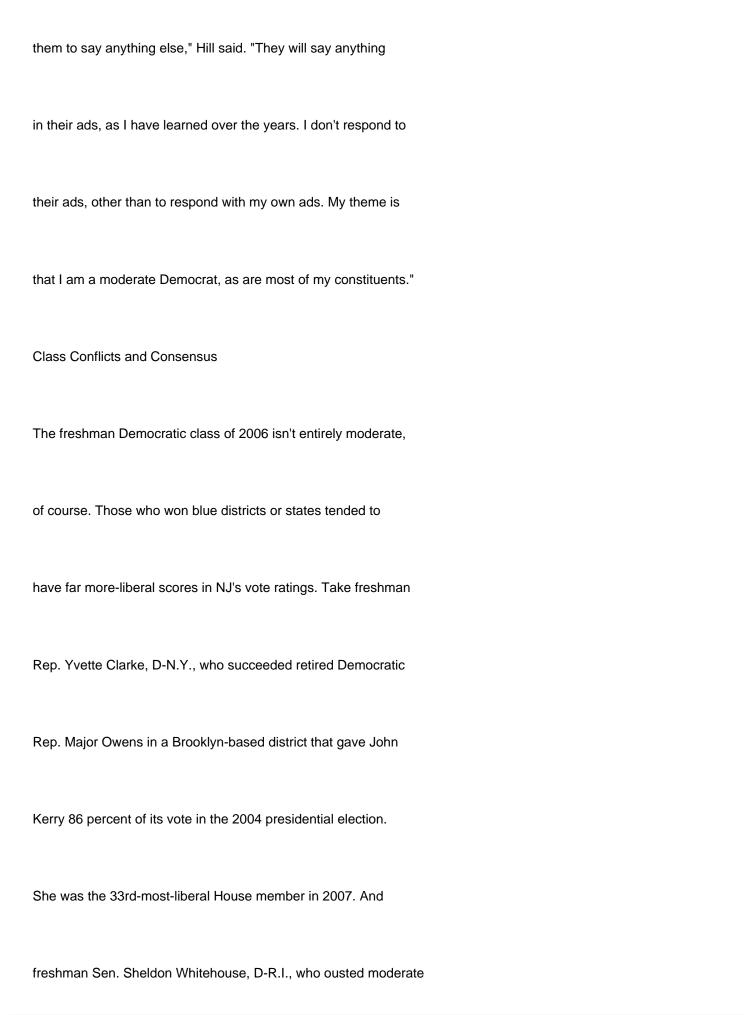


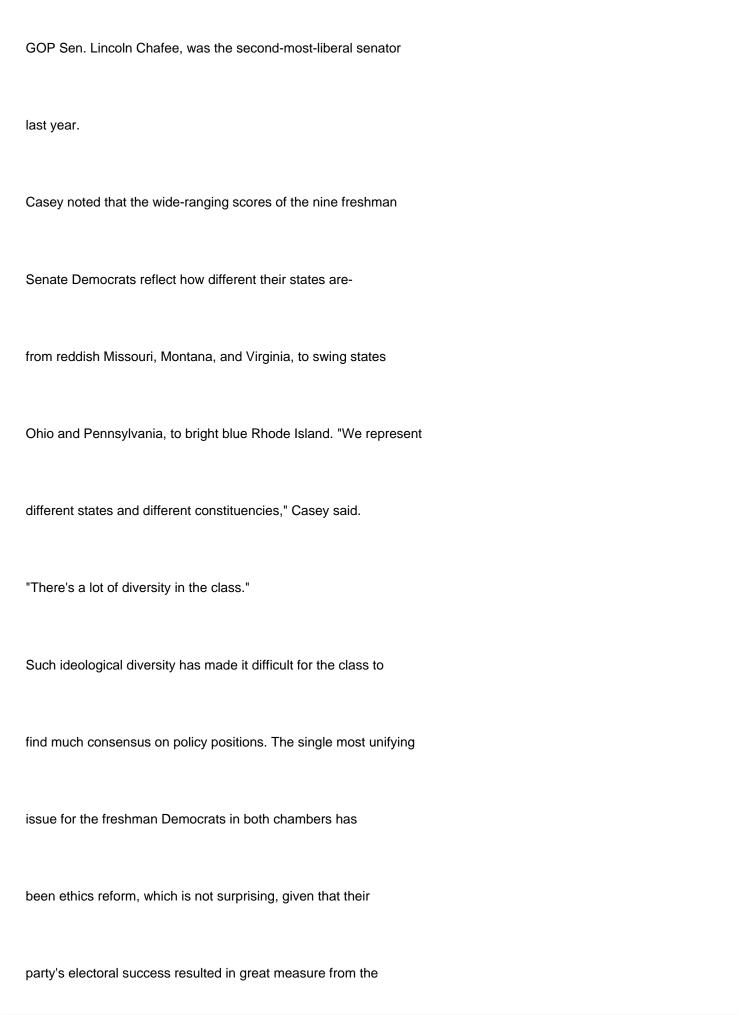


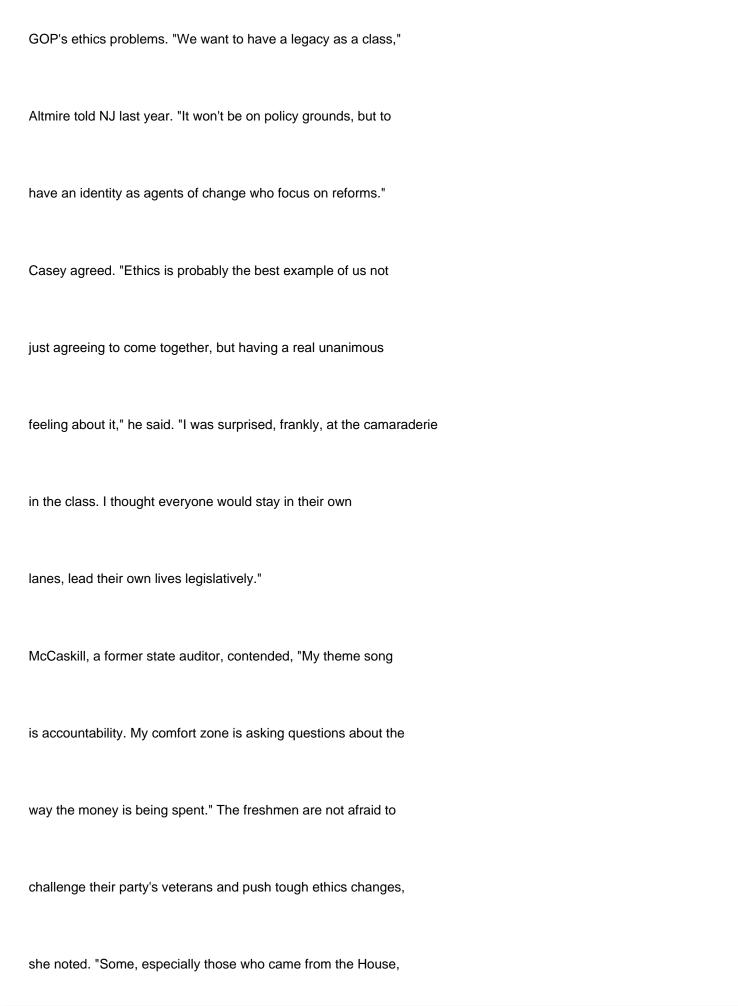












are much more diplomatic and much more strategic. And some

of us have a bad habit of picking up a two-by-four."